3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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872 in any numbers, the trained assistants in Mission work
797 who form one of the principal successes of Missions among other tribes.

157 But this does not imply that the Konde are without virtues. They are very shy, and respectful to authority, the latter a characteristic that atones for many defects in the minds of those who consider subserviency the primary virtue in a native of Africa. Their conservative nature prevents them being too free with strangers, and they will not greet a passing European, either until he takes the initiative, or until long friendship has convinced them that it will not be regarded as an undue liberty. Once their confidence has been gained, they are found to be merry, laughing, and bright. The friendliness of children is an attractive feature of the tribe. And the adults are most willing to be friendly also, provided the first advances are made by the European. When one begins to know them intimately, it becomes obvious that their backwardness is not due to lack of capacity, but to an unyielding conservatism, which leads them to think long—and some have been thinking for a generation—before committing themselves to anything new. "We will think about it" is a common response to invitations to take their place alongside the more progressive tribes. Yet with it all they are a lovable people, responsive to friendliness, deeply attached to each other, and to all who rightly claim the name of friend.

• 567 Slavery is, formally at least, a thing of the past. It is asserted by natives that some men and women are still in slavery, but while that is not impossible, no one

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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has ever been able, or willing, to give me the name of either slave or owner in a single case. Yet such is the terrifying influence which some natives exert over others, that it is not difficult to believe that here and there throughout the country there may be individuals to whom continued slavery is a smaller evil than the wrath of an exposed owner, and therefore the fact of their bondage is not reported to the authorities.

Many circumstances might combine to make the freeman a slave, and the slave a freeman. A man who led astray the wife of a chief, if discovered, paid a son or daughter to the husband. So also, one found stealing from a garden was similarly penalised. Mocking at a lame man was a crime which could only be atoned for by the same kind of payment; and a man who could not pay just debts might himself be taken by the creditor. Prisoners of war, it need hardly be added, were slaves. On the other hand, the owner might find himself obliged by circumstances to restore children so obtained; if not, he was obliged to find wives or husbands for them. A slave might be a member of the council, and there are cases where slaves acquitted themselves so well in battle that they were granted their freedom. So long as it remained purely domestic, it was not an altogether intolerable condition. There was an ex-slave living at Karonga not long ago, who supported as long as she lived the old woman who was once his owner, and that, as he assured me, from genuine affection. On the other hand, a man, not yet beyond the prime of life, was present when a slave was buried alive along with the

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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•567 body of his late owner. And another knew of a slave, bound and weighted with stones, thrown into the lake to feed the crocodiles. Such things may with reason be assumed to be impossible to-day, whether it be true or not that slavery still exists.

643 chief. For Chungu must not die a natural death;
645 the land would be turned into water should such a
771 calamity be allowed to happen. Having decided that the illness is really grave, the councillors, one by one, give their voice in the formula, "*Siku na mwaka*," literally, day and year; but actually meaning, "Does God die?" In solemn procession these terrible persons enter the house, and, having turned out the chief's wives, lay him down on the floor. Two keep him in that posture, while a third stops his breath by holding his mouth and nostrils, a fourth meanwhile gently slapping him all over the body until the life has gone out of him.

643 No announcement of the death was made. One of
645 the councillors lived in the royal dwelling, so that if
766 any came to consult Chungu a response might be given, and as he was rarely seen by common men, it was easy to keep up the deception. The councillors with their own hands digged the grave, and on their shoulders, at midnight, carried the body, anointed with lion fat, and enswathed in cloth, to the place of
• [567] burial. Six or eight slaves, who did not return, went
[782] with them. Four went down into the grave to receive the body of their dead master, two at the head and two at the feet, and, in sitting position, held him in their arms. The remaining slaves being placed on the top, the soil was filled in on living and dead.

After the lapse of about a month, a big iron drum, now lost, was beaten, and it conveyed only one message to the people. "*Kutebite ku Mphande*," Mphande (the royal residence) has done its work;

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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726 789 protection by the medicine man; and the armed warriors, standing in rows or circles, were sprinkled with medicine from a huge pot, rendering them and their weapons irresistible. In the rising of 1906 in the Songea area, it is said that the fighting men were so confident of the power of the drugs that they rushed up to the mouths of the German guns, only to perish there by the bullets which they believed would be turned into water.

Besides the publicly administered medicine, a more powerful drug was to be had for a fee; and the chief himself was armed and protected at all points in this way. One medicine ensured that his spear would find the heart of an enemy; another that the enemy's spear would fall short; a third he chewed as the fight went on; and a few very great chiefs possess a medicine which enables them to remove a fatal wound to a non-fatal spot. Those who could obtain it attached another medicine to the spear handle, and some carried a charm on their shields.

726 714 Fighting men carried spears numbering from six up to twenty; and the greater the number the bolder the hero, for a large number of spears indicated a determination not to run until every weapon available had been thrown at the enemy, or otherwise disposed of. Great heroes were followed by slaves who carried additional supplies of weapons. Some had wide shields of ox-hide, and others had narrow strips strengthened by slim bamboos. On their heads they wore the *ikipubili*, a plume of red and black feathers, the capture of which from an enemy was

[567]

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

428 was set aside in succession, his right to inherit the property and widows was none the less undisputed.[1]

SLAVERY (AMONG THE NGONDE)

●567 Slaves were obtained by the Kyungu and chiefs in warfare and as fines for offences. The Kyungu gave women slaves to his important chiefs, thus strengthening the kinship bonds between them and himself, for the recipient would regard the Kyungu as his father-in-law if he took the woman to wife, and her children would be counted as grandchildren of the Kyungu. The owner of a slave was obliged to find a spouse for him or her, and a male slave could rise to positions of importance.[2]

LAND TENURE

423 No individual can own land unless he himself either works it or is a full member of the local community. Rights to land are only rigorously defined in cases of scarce and
425 valuable land. Owing to witchcraft beliefs, movement from one place to another is constant. In taking up new land after a move, a stranger is granted land by the villagers acting through their great commoners, the chief being merely informed. Both chiefs and villagers welcome new-comers. If a man returns after absence to his own village he has a claim to enter into possession of his old building site and gardens. The claim varies in strength according to his relations with the villagers and the chief. If a man goes to a neighbouring village within a chiefdom, he can go on hoeing his old gardens, ownership depending on effective use.

Land suitable for beans and maize plots is the most valuable, as it is used continuously for years. Land for other crops is plentiful, so that if a man leaves a garden fallow for only two years anyone may cultivate it. The most scarce and valuable land is in the bottom of old volcanic craters, and in these cases rights are insisted upon, so that if a man moves to a new chiefdom, his next of kin claims his crater land. In other cases, when a man moves from a chiefdom, his old gardens revert to the joint ownership of villagers and chief. When a man dies his heir takes his wives, cattle, and moveable property, but not his land, unless he comes to live in the village.

Rights in trees differ according to the types of trees and according to local customs. In some cases rights in trees are lost when a man moves away, in others the rights to valuable trees are claimed by the nearest kinsman in the neighbourhood. Now that chiefdoms are no longer in a state of potential war with each other, the group within which property is held is wider. Coffee-trees have been declared by the Federation of Chiefs to be the property of the original planter, even though he may have moved to another chiefdom. The Agricultural Officer takes over abandoned coffee-trees to tend them for pest control.

423 Pasture is jointly owned by the whole village group, no individual having exclusive rights in it.

No direct charge is made for the right to build or cultivate. Certain obligations are owed to a chief in view of his over-lordship, e.g. providing cooked food for communion of the chief's own immediate family, but this obligation is reciprocal, the chief being expected in return to kill beasts to feed the people.[3]

[1] Wilson, J., 1939, pp. 32-6. [2] Ibid., p. 46; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 38-40.
[3] Wilson, J., 1938, pp. 30-48; Mackenzie, 1925, p. 93.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

652 431 this was done by all chiefs or only by the great chiefs; but it is certain that the great chiefs possessed more of these cloths than their juniors.

652 431 764 But perhaps the most important traditional use of cloth by the Kyungus was for funeral gifts.[1] The social significance of funeral ceremonial in Ngonde and among the Nyakyusa is hard to exaggerate;[2] for both the economic and the emotional aspects not only of kinship but also of village and political relationships are given formal expression most frequently at funerals. And a gift at a funeral carries greater weight than one on any other occasion.

652 431 ● 567 583 Then, again, chiefs and nobles who brought food to Mbande were often given either a beast or a woman slave in return. "When one of the chiefs had caught a great many fish . . . . . he would gather his men and go to Mbande . . . . . Then the Kyungu would tell one of the nobles of Ngonde to go and fetch a beast or, if no beast were available—and cattle were scarce in the old days—he would give him a woman. And if the chief liked her he would take her in marriage and she would become his lady,[3] but if he did not, then he would take her to his own country and sell her there for a cow." (We expressed some surprise at the rate of exchange.) "Yes, truly, for one cow only, cows were very scarce in those days." And sometimes, in order to make sure he would like her, the visiting chief would be allowed to choose his own girl. "When one of his sons came to visit him the Kyungu would sometimes give orders that he should be shown all the (slave) girls and choose the one he liked best; and so the chief would choose a local girl[4] and marry her. And he could never then sell her, once he had chosen her in love."

Now the gift of a woman slave had many social implications. If she was taken to wife the recipient regarded the Kyungu thereafter as his father-in-law, as well as his "father." She herself became free and her children spoke of the Kyungu as their grandfather. And these gifts did more than any others to strengthen the bonds of kinship between the Kyungu and his subordinate chiefs.

652 431 To his common subjects also, if they had deserved well of him, the Kyungu would occasionally give either cloths or a woman or a cow; and the great chiefs of Ngonde likewise and even ordinary chiefs and nobles did the same. And these subordinate authorities, as we have seen, also used to entertain their own subjects generously with food

[1] *Vide infra* section 7.

[2] Cf. Wilson, "Nyakyusa Conventions of Burial," *Bantu Studies*, March 1939.

[3] I use "lady" here to translate "mambo" which is the title of honour used for a chief's wife; the implication is that she does not cease to be a slave.

[4] Slaves were of two kinds, the relatives of criminals and war captives (*vide infra* sections 5 and 6). It was apparently customary to choose one of the first kind on such occasions.

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439 direct with the ivory traders or with the Kyungu, for cloths or cattle or slaves. And groups of chiefdoms and fiefs co-operated in hoeing the milasa.

Nor did the ivory trade enter very deeply into the economic relations of [291] the local rulers with their subjects. The common people usually dressed in exiguous pieces of bark cloth or of a coarse cloth which they manufactured themselves from a kind of cotton; the scarce imported cloths, which came through Mbande, were normally used by chiefs and nobles only. They added to the prestige of the chiefs and nobles by linking them visibly with the opulence of Mbande, but did not much increase their own subjects' economic dependence on them. Though here again we must note the occasional exchanges of ivory and other wealth between [652] commoners and chiefs or nobles. The important economic links between local rulers and their subjects were determined, on the one hand, by the differential bride-price, by polygyny and by their power of requisitioning food, and, on the other hand, by their position as chief hosts to their people.

The ivory-trade, in fact, enabled Mbande to bind the local rulers to it in a kind of permanent hierarchical alliance, but neither the constitution of the local groups nor their autonomy in relation to one another was very much affected thereby.

5. *LEGAL ELEMENTS (MIDDLE PERIOD).*

We now come to a third element of the central power of Mbande, the traditional part which it played in the maintenance of law. We will take this topic in two parts: first, the ways in which Mbande maintained its own authority and that of its subordinates, and, second, the part played by Mbande and those lesser authorities in maintaining the common law of Ngonde.

(a). *CONSTITUTIONAL LAW: TREASON ETC.*

687 Treason against the Kyungu was summarily punished with little or
● 567 no legal argument. The commonest form of treason seems to have been too near an approach to one of his wives. We remember that his wives were very closely guarded from all men, for their adultery might magically bring sickness on him, and if he fell ill then the whole land was magically endangered. One side of the hill Mbande is precipitous, and over this cliff (*Ipungu*) all traitors were thrown, including such as had looked on his wives naked; while many members of the traitors' families were subsequently enslaved.

"If a man had looked on the wives of the Kyungu bathing, he himself would be killed by being thrown over the cliff and all his

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children and relatives would be apprehended and brought to the Kyungu by the messengers. The Kyungu, or rather the nobles of Ngonde, would select the best-looking girls and let the others go. And then it was all over, any kinsfolk who had fled could return in safety to their homes. For in the old days when a man did wrong there was no legal argument and no trial. All his kinsfolk were terrified and the men fled, but the women, not having the strength to flee far, would be apprehended. The messengers would apprehend not only his full siblings and their children but his half siblings and their children too." Not only girls but boys also were sometimes kept as slaves. One of our informants made it clear, however, that it was always possible for a rich family to redeem them later, both boys and girls, by giving one or two beasts in exchange for each.

Our enquiries about the statement that "in the old days there was no legal argument and no trial" brought a clear distinction between ordinary cases and cases of treason either against the Kyungu or against the great chiefs: "In cases between two ordinary men, whether commoners or junior chiefs, there was indeed real legal procedure: a chief would take the case, one would pay damages to the other and smooth relationships would be re-established between them. But what we meant was that when a man wronged the Kyungu or one of the great chiefs then there was no sort of legal argument at all!"

It is not relevant here to enter into any full account of the institution of slavery in Ngonde; but it must be pointed out that it was a very different thing from that introduced by the Arabs in the late 19th century. Few of these early slaves appear to have been sold outside Ngonde, and the Longwazi traders carried away white ivory alone. Nor was there any impassable barrier between slave and free. All our informants maintain that slaves were treated rather as younger sons and daughters than as chattels, with the one exception that they could be sold to another man. A woman slave married by a free man herself at once became free, and the children of two married slaves were free also.

Another form of treason against the Kyungu, we were told, was to insult him by whispered criticism. The present Kyungu said that in the old days a Kyungu used occasionally to be insulted by one of his sons, the chiefs, and that then, "if the Kyungu was a fierce man," he would send the other chiefs against him and have all his cows and wealth taken and his houses burnt. The way in which the Kyungu might be insulted was this: after the election of a new Kyungu perhaps one of the other chiefs would begin to ask secretly why on earth they had chosen such an unsuitable man for the position, and suggest that he had none of the qualities of a chief; then if the Kyungu heard of

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726 manner to his own predecessors in his title. The territorial nobles, however, did not then pray to theirs, although they went to fight; tribal war was carried on under royal auspices alone. The Kyungu himself remained behind in his house praying for their success. Some of the nobles of Ngonde went with the expedition, carrying the magic war-tails of the Kyungu, his spear *Kamisa* and a magic horn.

721 The territorial nobles of the hills, we were told, were not summoned to take part in tribal wars or punitive expeditions. And this fact is perhaps the clearest evidence of the relatively slight hold which Mbande had upon them. Nor, even in the plain, were the Kyungu's orders invariably obeyed without question. It is said that when Mujombe appealed for help against the Bemba chief Kyepele (=Cepela) Kyungu Mwangonde at first ordered the chiefs of Ngana to go alone to the war, without Mwakasungula. For Mwakasungula was his only surviving adult son and he feared to lose him. But the chiefs of Ngana refused to start without Mwakasungula, who in the end went with them.

726 The same warning that preceded a civil war was given by the men of Ngonde in tribal warfare also. "When the Kyungu sent his people against strangers he always forbade any surprise attacks, let there be parley first and explanation; let them point out that they had no wish for war, that it was the others who had forced war on them by wantonly killing one of their men (or whatever the reason was). We never fought like the Ngoni, always we explained our case first, asking why, if the other side had any just cause for their actions, they had not refrained and come and talked it all over with us. And so it was in the war against Kyepele, we explained our case."

727 We have seen already that the booty of punitive expeditions was
● 567 divided among the chiefs and nobles who had fought and the Kyungu, and so it was in tribal warfare also. War was an important source of revenue for Mbande, bringing in both cattle and slaves. The war against the Bemba Kyepele (=Cepela) is particularly remembered for the number of slaves which Mwakasungula and the other chiefs brought back from it. While discussing slavery with some men of Ngonde one of us remarked that there had been little or no slavery among the Nyakyusa. "Yes, indeed, that is so: there was a lot of slavery here in Ngonde and very little among the Nyakyusa, because here people were captured in war. From Kyepele, for instance, a great host of slaves was captured and every chief at that time had Bemba slaves.

"And it was the custom for every chief to take a certain proportion of the slaves he had captured and hand them over to the Kyungu." (Why?) "Because they thought that it was his prayers for success that had enabled them to fight so well, to rout the enemy and to capture slaves

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and wealth." Once again we see how closely connected were the religious powers of the Kyungu with his wealth.

And the military authority of Mbande, like that of the lesser rulers, was correlated both as cause and as effect with the other factors of its general political status. The central power rested in part on its military functions: it was a tribal rallying point for defence against alien attacks, together with the hierarchy which depended upon it, it provided the necessary large-scale organization for military success, its religious powers were never more valued than in wartime, while victory brought wealth and prestige both to the Kyungu and his subordinates. But, as comparison with the Nyakyusa shows,[1] it was only the flow of wealth up and down the hierarchy, in combination with the religious functions of Mbande, that made this large-scale military organization possible.

(c) *WARFARE AND AUTONOMY.*

Now warfare is, at one and the same time, an example of order and of disorder in human society. By social order I mean the systematic overcoming of lesser autonomies within existing wider groups: the overcoming of individual autonomy within the family and the local community, the overcoming of family, local and other autonomies within the tribe or state, the overcoming of tribal and state autonomies within still wider groups. By social disorder I mean the temporary overcoming by a lesser autonomy of the forces of some existing wider group. Legal procedure is one of most obvious examples of order, crime is one of the most obvious examples of disorder.

But warfare falls between these two extremes. Seldom are lesser autonomies so completely overcome as they are within a group at war, never is the autonomy of that group more clearly dominant over the forces making for a wider order. And it is of fundamental importance for the understanding of any social field to see which groups within it have both sufficient unity and sufficient autonomy to engage in recurrent warfare with one another. The size of the groups which go to war is one of the marks by which we distinguish primitive from civilized societies ——the smaller the warring groups the more primitive the society.

Now the recurrent civil wars of Ngonde in the middle period of its history show us that, beneath its hierarchical facade, it was a society of the same kind as that of the Nyakyusa across the Songwe; the centralized political organization was too weak permanently to overcome the local autonomies of village, fief and chiefdom. It is true that the mercantile divinity of Mbande gave sufficient unity to Ngonde to enable it to fight as

[1] Vide infra p. 64.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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CHAPTER XII

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

(a) THE GROWTH OF A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

With the arrival of European missionaries at the end of the nineteenth century[1] a new set of religious ideas was introduced and a new form of social grouping established. The early missionaries settled on land which they bought from various chiefs and gathered round them workers and refugees—the survivors of slave-raids in neighbouring areas—many of whom gradually became converts. In BuNyakyusa a new type of village, a Christian village, was established on mission land and the converts who occupied it were largely withdrawn from the authority of the chief, looking instead to the missionary as their leader. In Ngonde the development was rather different. The converts were not gathered on mission land but stayed in their own villages, where they were expected to spread the gospel among their neighbours. The difference was partly due to a difference in policy between the Scottish mission operating[2] in Ngonde, and the Moravian and Lutheran[3] missions operating in BuNyakyusa, but it was emphasized by differences in the history of the two areas. In Ngonde the missionaries became the allies of the Ngonde against the Arab slavers, whereas in BuNyakyusa there was no such alliance. The Scottish mission deliberately sought to convert and train the traditional leaders, and so gain the whole community, whereas the Moravians and Lutherans preferred to withdraw their converts from the surrounding pagan community.[4]

The number of converts increased much more rapidly in Ngonde than in BuNyakyusa, but after forty years of missionary activity the structural pattern was growing similar. More and more

[1] For an account of the first contacts of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde with Europeans, and bibliography on it, cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 80-1, 273-6.

[2] The Livingstonia Mission of the Free Church of Scotland which have united with the Church of Scotland. It is still referred to in Ngonde as 'Free Church'.

[3] The Berlin Society (Berlin I).

[4] For an admirable account of the development of mission policy in East Africa, see Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (1952). Dr. Oliver describes the withdrawal of converts on to mission stations as typical of the *first* phase of mission activity and this is true for the Moravian and Lutheran missions, but Christians in Ngonde were never so withdrawn.